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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000469

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/USSES, AF A A/S CARTER, AF/C, AF/E  
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU  
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

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SUBJECT: SE GRATION VISIT: NISS CHIEF GHOSH LOSES HIS COOL  
ON NGO ISSUE

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alberto M. Fernandez for Reasons 1.4(b)  
) and (d)

11. (S) SUMMARY: President's Special Envoy Gration met with National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) Director Salah Ghosh on the morning of April 2. Ghosh rejected the possibility of the 13 expelled international NGOs being allowed back into Sudan but when pressed accepted a formula to mitigate and prevent further crisis. Ghosh ended the meeting with a message about the recent Israeli air strikes near Port Sudan, offering cooperation with the U.S. and requesting that Israel work with Egypt to combat trafficking rather than attacking Sudan, claiming that "we are victims (of the traffickers) too." END SUMMARY.

12. (C) In his first meeting with SE Gration April 2, NISS Chief Salah Ghosh enthusiastically welcomed the SE's "new approach" to U.S.-Sudan relations. Emphasizing that NISS is "a technical office, not political" he said he appreciated that the Special Envoy was "not a politician looking for another job." Ghosh praised the CIA for their cooperation and noted that Sudan is "against terrorists" who he said "spoil the image of Islam."

13. (C) Despite his "technical role," Ghosh spent the majority of the meeting on political issues rather than intelligence issues. Insisting that the GoS wants to find a solution to the problems in Darfur, he said that while some rebel groups operate everywhere in Darfur, the GoS currently takes "no offensive action", except against the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)." Ghosh pointed out that the SAF has conducted no recent offensive actions against rebels such as SLA/AW or SLA/Unity who have not attacked government positions. Ghosh posited that the GoS cannot deal with JEM until after it "solves the problem of Chad," claiming N'Djamena "provides a backbone which would only create another JEM if it needed to." Even if a deal was arrived at with JEM, if relations with Chad are not fixed a new Chadian/Libyan back group will emerge to replace it. Ghosh also stated that Libya "supplies logistics to Chad, supplies which then go to rebels who attack Sudan." Ghosh appealed for U.S. assistance on border control issues, stating that the current state of cross-border affairs "is not just."

14. (C) Echoing statements made by MFA Undersecretary Muttriff Siddiq earlier in the day (septel) Ghosh insisted on calling any reference to the expelled NGOs "improving humanitarian aid," explaining that because President Al-Bashir had announced the expulsion publicly, "there is no going back."

When pushed on this subject, Ghosh raised his voice and demanded "if you want to solve Darfur, satisfying special interest groups in Washington will not work! Save Darfur and the like want regime change in Khartoum! If you want improvement in the humanitarian situation, let's talk. But if you insist that the NGOs come back, you are playing political games and wasting your time."

15. (C) Pressed by the Special Envoy on a potential compromise to his view on the expelled NGOs returning in light of the upcoming rainy season and the precarious situation many in Darfur will find themselves in next month, Ghosh stated that he also is "very concerned about the people of Darfur" but that the NGO issue was a "national security issue, since the NGOs were working to collect evidence for the International Criminal Court." Putting it another way, he said "it's just like the U.S. after September 11, when you shut down Islamic charities without cause." Ghosh claimed that the expelled NGOs had engaged in political activities and would not be allowed back. Pressed further by the Special Envoy, Ghosh conceded that the GOS would be willing to accept "1,000 new NGOs" and stated that Sudan is open to accepting any new American NGOs or proposals for mitigating the effects of the expulsion (short of their return). Ghosh promised that Sudanese staff from the expelled organizations could move to fill similar positions under a "different flag," that harassment of expelled NGOs would cease, that the quick entry of new NGOs would be expedited, and that the the new formula would include an enhanced role for the UN.

16. (S) Changing subjects, Ghosh said he had a message for Washington regarding the air strikes earlier this year near

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Port Sudan. He said that while the smuggling of weapons and people is not new, Sudan had "some intelligence" that Israel was behind the recent attacks on Sudanese territory. He said that Sudan had not said much about the incident "since, so far, Israel has not said they did it" and "there's not much Sudan can do now anyway." But he warned that "maybe in the future we can do something - if not us, our sons. The Sudanese regime is not seeking a confrontation with Israel. If Israel is aiming to stop smuggling, they cannot stop it with shooting. The best way to handle the situation is to capture them, to question them. They must cooperate with Egypt, since we don't have relations with Israel. The Rashaida (tribe in the eastern Sudan engaged in smuggling) in many countries is now beginning to talk about killing Americans and Israelis." They are also present in Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and other countries. Ghosh finished on this point by claiming that it is also in Sudan's interests to stop the smugglers, since they affect Sudan's national security as well.

17. (C) COMMENT: As one of the more powerful figures in the NCP regime, Ghosh's role in today's line-up of NCP meetings appeared to be that of laying down a red line on what the regime will not accept with regard to the NGO expulsion issue. In order to allow President Bashir to save face following his very public embrace of the expulsion of the NGOs, the regime is willing to allow a formula to replace the capacity lost and to negotiate possibly new, more favorable conditions under which NGOs in Sudan may operate. SE Gration will continue to explore practical and urgent options for resolving the NGO expulsion issue in further discussions with senior NCP and UN officials as well as with the NGO community. END COMMENT.  
FERNANDEZ